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FM AMEMBASSY LUANDA

TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 4104

INFO RUCNSAD/SOUTHERN AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY

UNCLAS LUANDA 000636

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

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E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [PREF](#) [AO](#)

SUBJECT: ANGOLA: EVICTIONS SHOW PROGRESS AND PROBLEMS

¶1. (SBU) Summary: On the morning of June 19, 2007, military, police, and private security forces forcibly evicted those who were squatting on military-owned land. Local human rights organizations decried the use of military forces for the protection of private development projects, yet failed to note the fact that the soldiers were used to clear illegal settlements on military land. In contrast, the local UN Human Rights Office noted the progress the GRA showed in notifying residents of planned construction and evictions and providing housing alternatives. End Summary.

¶2. (U) On June 19, 2007 residents were evicted and homes destroyed in Luanda's "Comandante Gika" complex to make way for a private high-value commercial and residential development project. This military-owned land on prime real estate near the city center has long been a favored site for internally displaced persons (IDPs) and war veterans, and multiple evictions have been carried out at the site over the last 6 years, with evictees returning time and again. The military has leased the land to a development company for a complex that includes shopping, housing, and office space.

¶3. (U) Current residents were notified of the impending construction and the subsequent need to move as early as August 2006, and a neighborhood committee worked with the GRA to identify alternative housing. The GRA moved the majority of residents to new housing in Cuacuaco, a suburb 20 km from downtown Luanda. Some residents, however, moved back to Gika in protest, saying that their assigned housing was already occupied and that local administrators were not resolving the problem. These protesters were then caught in the forced evictions; five residents, including the community organizer, were arrested and released.

¶4. (U) Local human rights activists used both local and international press outlets to decry the use of military forces for private development projects, but failed to note that military forces were operating on military-owned land. Soldiers were ostensibly there to assist the eviction agents hired by the development company, and have stayed on-site to prevent people from returning. Human rights organizations also publicized an alleged rape in connection with the evictions, but subsequent information indicates that the incident in question occurred before the evictions took place, and does not appear to be related to the evictions.

¶5. (SBU) Comment: Though the UN Human Rights Office is still investigating alleged irregularities in the assignment of alternative housing and the alleged rape, it does not currently plan to make any official statement to the GRA on the matter. The UNHRO privately commented that the issue is more complex than portrayed in the press, and it does not want to appear unsupportive of GRA processes and policies that are providing increased protection and alternative housing for IDPs. The GRA is seen as improving its procedures for providing alternative housing and giving advance notification of evictions. In this case, it appears that some residents chose to ignore GRA resettlement offers and prior notification and remain on military-controlled land to face eviction. End Comment

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